Guided to Jesus -Epiphany 2: John 1: 43-51 Jan 14, 2024

Last week to end the Xmas season we celebrated Epiphany with the coming of the magi,

While Epiphany is a day, it is also a season in the church calendar

(sometimes follow at parts of the year, but don’t stick to it

Mainly for Advent & Lent)

The word epiphany means to make known or to reveal

“Had an epiphany” went we realized something

So the church season of Epiphany is a season of revealing

* Began last week with the story of the magi following the star to reveal a special baby, the Messiah
* A season in which Jesus, as the Son of God, is revealed to the world
* Includes stories like the baptism of Jesus, 1st miracle (water to wine), calling of disciples, and stories that reveal J as God.

E fits nicely after Christmas, (Xmas -wisemen - Jesus) because the wise men demonstrate that Jesus came for all people, of all nations, of all races and that the work of God in the world would not be limited to only a few.

E. begs us to ask, “how are we also led to Jesus, our Messiah?”

Our scripture reading today is a story of calling.

In the gospel of John,(earlier in John 1) J’s 1st disciples join up by seeing Jesus and declaring him the Messiah.

In this next scene, (todays) Jesus and his soon to be disciples are in some non-specific ordinary place, going about their daily business,

and without much fuss or fanfare or explanation, J sees Philip, says “follow me” and off he goes, and as he does, Philip goes to Nathanael and invites him also. “We found the one that scriptures tell us about”

When Nathanael balks, (Nazareth?) Philip offers the same invitation Jesus gave to his first disciples a few verses earlier: “Come and see.”

Nathanael would have known the scriptures and had been waiting for the Messiah, so after a short interaction with Jesus, Nat is ready to declare Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Nathanael knows he has found Jesus, the Messiah, because he has let his understanding of scripture guide him.

We might be unclear to us what exactly they are referring to in their conversations about fig trees, but it appears that Nat’s knowledge of scripture guided him to Jesus,

in much the same way, in last weeks scripture of the magi, Herod asked scholars to search the scriptures to find out where he could find Jesus. Scripture leads to Jesus.

Scripture guided these first followers to Jesus.

I noticed something in reading both stories of Jesus calling his disciples

* after being called, Philip calls over Nat,
* the story a few verses earlier, John& Andrew go tell Simon Peter they have found the Messiah
* in both cases those who are called then also call others to follow

And all of them actively, not only in their hearts or at some distance, got up and followed Jesus. Guided, called and followed.

When I think of my own call story, (not to ministry but in general, the call to follow Jesus) there are times when it has felt like God has called me personally, -no voice from the sky or divine angel visits, but the gentle (or not) nudging of the Spirit. A feeling that this was the work that I was supposed to be doing.

* A calling to spend my summers at camp teaching kids about God
* Calling to my work with Adults with disabilities as a social worker,
* calling to Georgia to witness God’s work at Jubilee Partners,
* a calling in my vocation as a farmer and steward of the land,
* and a calling to my work in the church

But there are other times when the call to follow Jesus came through others;

* others reaching out to me to suggest or encourage or guide.
* For many of us, it’s our parents, friends and even our children who have mentored us in our faith.
* Someone has encouraged or assisted us in developing a gift
* Or presented us with an opportunity that when looking back, is clearly God sent.

When I was 22, and volunteering as a youth leader in my home church in Steinbach, an elder in my congregation (not one I was particularly close with) stopped me one day after church and asked if I had thought about going to MWC as a representative our youth. I hadn’t, but now the seed was planted. I was invited to come and see what God was doing in the Mennonite church in Africa.

And somehow the right things and people kept falling in my path, that the next summer in 2003, I attended MWC in Zimbabwe with a young adult contingent from Manitoba.

I truly believe I wouldn’t have gone to Africa if he wouldn’t have suggested it and encouraged me to do so, to go and see.

Sometimes it is a person or experience that has guided you to Jeus or sometimes it is the practice of following that guides you to Jesus.

Several years back I used a practice of note taking (wouldn’t call it journaling). I was in a place where I felt easily frustrated by those around me, most often with Ben, so on days when I was still grouchy before bed, I would make written lists of character traits of that person that I loved.

(some days, all day long my brain had been making the opposite list, and so i made the effort to note the good moments and traits I saw in the day.)

I found that it allowed me to lift these good things to G in prayer, and bit by bit picked me out of a negative spiral of compounding frustrations.

In the end it was a practice I could quit because I was happier, better able to find the good and let the frustrations run off me, and overall felt guided by Jesus in my relationships.

Last week, I invited you to a practice that also invites you to be guided by Jesus.

* Star Words
* A practice in a number of other churches, that with each new year, you draw a new star word and keep it for the year
* Used to consider how God might be speaking to you this year through the word printed on this star.

While I have only done this 1 year, and i forgot about my word sometime in the year, others have practiced this longer.

One story I read:

The someone picked out the word “practice” and she says she almost threw it back in the basket.

She didn’t like the word “Practice.”

But she tapped it up in her office, and listened for how God might speak though that word.

The thing that she thought of first was how her childhood cello teacher would always ask her after hearing her stumble through a lesson, “Marci, did you practice this week?” Obviously the answer was not much.

She wondered if she could practice better as an adult. And so she tried, and found that by making time for her cello, she hadn’t lost the time needed for other things. She says “Which suggests that even in my busy life, I have more time than I suspect.”

It made her think about how she wanted to spend her time

* Watching TV or Scrolling on her phone
* Going for a walk or Learn to dance
* Read a book
* Or taking up a musical instrument

Of all the things that she practiced, she was learning that happiness must be found in the practice, not merely in that future goal of perfection. And so she plays her cello in church, imperfect as she is, as a practice of sharing her joys and her gifts.

Year of practice.

So I remind you of the invitation to explore your word, what it means, what scripture teaches about it, how it fits in your life, and see where God might lead you with this word.

This morning I have talked about a few different ways that we can be led/guided by God

1. Scripture (Nat, & wise men)
2. Invited by other to come and see
3. Guided by practices of following

The invitation remains today, “come and see”

When others invite you, go and see what God is doing

When you are called by Jesus, invite others to Come and see

We are guided by scripture, we are guided by Spirit filled experiences, we are guided by practices that stretch us and strengthen us, maybe even guided by our word of the year,

May we accept the invitation, Come and See what God has done, come and see what God is doing.

Prayer: God, you revealed your Son to every nation by the guidance of a star, and then when his mission began he called others to walk at his side, to listen and learn and invite others on this journey. We ask you to take our fears, our uncertainties, our apprehension and to help us to live boldly into the calling of Epiphany. To bare witness to God revealed and at work in our world. Help us to come and see. Amen.